

Message Text

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21

ACTION NEA-09

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P 110415Z JAN 75

FM AMCONSUL LAHORE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0291

INFO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINR, PINT, PK

SUBJ: NEW GOP MINISTER AND MINISTER OF STATE

REF: A) LAHORE 1390 (NOTAL); B) ISLAMABAD 0212 (NOTAL)

1. PRESIDENT FAZAL ELAHI CHAUDHRY SWORE IN CHAUDHRI HAFEEZULLAH CHEEMA AS FEDERAL MINISTER AND SHAHZADA SAEED-UR-RASHID ABBASI AS FEDERAL MINISTER OF STATE IN CEREMONY AT PUNJAB GOVERNOR'S HOUSE IN LAHORE MORNING JAN 10. IN AFTERNOON, LAHORE RADIO ANNOUNCED THAT CHEEMA WOULD REPLACE KHURSHID HASAN MEER AS MINISTER FOR LABOR, HEALTH, SOCIAL WELFARE AND POPULATION PLANNING, AND THAT ABBASI WOULD TAKE OVER PORTFOLIO VACATED BY CHEEMA AS MINISTER OF STATE FOR SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY. CEREMONY WAS ATTENDED BY PRIME MINISTER BHUTTO, PUNJAB GOVERNOR QURESHI AND CHIEF MINISTER RAMAY, AMONG OTHER DIGNITARIES.

2. LAHORE PRESS FOR PAST SEVERAL DAYS HAD SPECULATED UPON VARIETY OF IMPENDING CHANGES, INCLUDING POSSIBLE APPOINTMENT OF PUNJAB GOVERNOR QURESHI TO FEDERAL CABINET AND HIS REPLACEMENT BY FORMER CHIEF MINISTER (AND GOVERNOR)

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MUSTAFA KHAR. NEWS THAT SENIOR-MOST FEDERAL AND PROVINCIAL

OFFICIALS WERE GATHERING IN LAHORE JANUARY 10 ADDED FUEL TO SUCH RUMORS OF CHANGES, WHICH IN FACT TURNED OUT TO BE FAR LESS MOMENTOUS. PRIME MINISTER, WHO ARRIVED HERE FROM LARKANA AFTERNOON JAN 9 (IN COMPANY OF BOTH PRESIDENT CHAUDHRY AND GOVERNOR QURESHI), SEEMED SOMEWHAT TAKEN ABACK BY CONJECTURE, WHICH HE TERMED "UNFORTUNATE" IN AIRPORT INTERVIEW ON ARRIVAL. HE CHIDED PRESS FOR UNWARRANTED GUESSWORK, SAYING, "YOU SHOULD KNOW AFTER THREE YEARS OF GOVERNMENT BY OUR PARTY HOW OUR SYSTEM OPERATES." IN RESPONSE TO JOURNALIST'S QUESTION, PRIME MINISTER SAID DECISION ABOUT APPOINTMENT OF SECRETARY GENERAL OF PPP WOULD BE TAKEN "VERY SOON", BUT NOT ON JANUARY 10.

3. APPOINTMENT OF CHEEMA TO SENIOR LEVEL OF CENTRAL CABINET MORE FULLY ROUNDS OUT PUNJAB REPRESENTATION IN THAT BODY, SINCE MINISTER IS FROM SARGODHA DIVISION, WHICH WAS NOT PREVIOUSLY REPRESENTED EXCEPT BY MINISTERS OF STATE. CHEEMA COMES FROM WELL-TO-DO SARGODHA FAMILY, WAS ELECTED ON PPP TICKET IN 1970 ELECTIONS, AND IN 1973 ACCOMPANIED PRIME MINISTER ON VISIT TO U.S. CHEEMA IS A RELATIVE NEWCOMER TO POLITICS AND HAS NOT FIGURED IN RECENT PROVINCIAL PPP CONTROVERSIES.

4. ABBASI, WHO IS ALSO KNOWN AS "PRINCE" SAEED-UR-RASHID, IS ABOUT 45 YEARS OLD AND COMES FROM FAMILY OF NAWAB OF BAHAWALPUR. HE WAS ELECTED TO NATIONAL ASSEMBLY IN 1970 AS INDEPENDENT. DURING 1969-70 CAMPAIGN, HE ADVOCATED POPULAR BAHAWALPUR DEMAND FOR SEPARATE PROVINCIAL STATUS. HOWEVER, IN NOVEMBER 1972 ABBASI JOINED PPP. SHORTLY THEREAFTER, HE HELPED BHUTTO ARRANGE HOSPITALITY FOR ISLAMABAD CHIEFS OF MISSION AT NAWAB'S PALACE IN BAHAWALPUR. HE WAS FIRST BAHWALPURI TO RISE ABOVE RANKS OF ORDINARY MNAS WHEN HE WAS APPOINTED PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY FOR COMMERCE IN OCTOBER 1974. HIS ELEVATION TO MINISTER OF STATE PROVIDES REPRESENTATION IN SECOND ECHELON OF CABINET FROM ALL FIVE DIVISIONS OF PUNJAB.

5. IMMEDIATE REACTION IN LAHORE TO NEW APPOINTMENTS INDICATES THAT MANY OBSERVERS STILL EXPECT FURTHER CHANGES AT TOP LEVEL OF NATIONAL HIERARCHY IN NEAR FUTURE, DESPITE UNCLASSIFIED

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PRIME MINISTER'S EFFORTS TO PUT LID ON SPECULATION.
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